



the **Pontifical Academy of Sciences**

Final Statement of the Brazil Climate Summit "From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience"

Children and Climate Action: Priorities and Commitments towards COP30

AN INITIATIVE

ORGANIZED BY

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



On 15-17 May, 2024, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences held a *Climate Resilience summit* at the Casina Pio IV, in the Vatican, with Governors of States, Mayors of Cities and civil society climate activists which elevated resilience through Mitigation, Adaptation, and Societal Transformation (MAST), with an emphasis on locally led actions and systemic change.

At the end of the summit, a *Planetary Call to Action* was developed and signed by Pope Francis and the participants, which recommended the planning and holding of “*Regional Climate Summits*,” among which a “*Regional Climate Summit in Brasilia*.”

Accordingly, on October 2-3, 2025, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, in partnership with the Alana and COP 30, organized a summit in Brasilia on “***Children and Climate Action: Priorities and Commitments towards COP 30***,” which affirmed their our unwavering commitment to advancing a climate-resilient Latin America, acknowledging the essential involvement of diverse stakeholder communities in this endeavor.

We, the co-organizers of the Brazil Climate Resilience Summit, “Children and Climate Action: Priorities and Commitments towards COP30,” convened in Brasília on October 2-3, 2025, under the auspices of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, in partnership with Alana and COP30, affirmed our unwavering commitment to

advancing a climate-resilient Latin America, acknowledging the essential involvement of diverse stakeholder communities in this endeavor. This Summit builds on the foundation laid by the [Planetary Call to Action](#), elevating resilience through Mitigation, Adaptation, and Societal Transformation (MAST), with an emphasis on locally led actions and systemic change.

The Brazil Summit addressed the issue of climate resilience from a child rights perspective. We examined technical guidelines for public policies that aim to protect, educate, care for, and empower children, whose rights must be upheld according to the principle of the best interests of the child as a primary consideration (Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

We emphasized the unique and central role Brazil plays in global climate resilience. The Amazon River Basin, which includes regions adjacent to Brazil that were represented at the Summit, deserves special attention as a critical component of the planet's future. We showcased studies of positive outcomes that will leave a lasting legacy of hope and optimism for how policy and strategy can drive change through MAST. We also presented an overview of existing child-centered solutions that are already being implemented in Brazil and South America. In the process we identified states and municipalities where effective climate resilience and adaptation actions are underway, as well as strategies to prioritize children in the climate agenda.

Strategic Orientation

MAST: A Three-Pillar Resilience Framework - We endorsed the MAST framework as a cornerstone of Latin America's climate resilience strategy:

- **Mitigation:** We support urgent actions to bend the global warming curve well below 2°C from pre-industrial levels. Mitigation must be scaled with justice, recognizing Latin America's right to sustainable development as it transitions toward a low-carbon future.
- **Adaptation:** Given Latin America's acute exposure to climate risks, we called for adaptation as an existential priority. Local resilience must anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate shocks—from droughts, heat waves, and floods to food and water insecurity.
- **Societal Transformation:** We endorsed the idea that profound behavioral, institutional, and systemic shifts are essential. This includes promoting sustainable land use, circular economies, the transformative role of forests and nature-based solutions, and education to build climate resilience.

Scientific Foundations

The scholarly consensus of leading Brazilian and international climate scientists, as guided by the

World Academy of Sciences, informed our discussions. The scientific white paper, included as Addendum 1, authored by Tercio Ambrizzi, Paulo Artaxo, and Carlos Nobre, noted:

Climate and Weather Impacts

The region has experienced a 1.55°C rise in global temperature above pre-industrial levels, and continental warming in some Brazilian areas has reached 2.4°C, posing a threat to agriculture, water resources, and public health. Extreme weather events—including heatwaves, droughts, storms, and floods—have increased nearly fortyfold in frequency and intensity, resulting in higher food and energy prices, social hardship, and mounting recovery and adaptation costs.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Risks

Global annual greenhouse gas emissions continue rising, reaching 57 billion tons of CO₂ equivalent in 2024, with fossil fuels accounting for 92% of the total. Atmospheric CO₂ concentration surged from 280 ppm in 1850 to 426 ppm in 2024. The persistence of these gases means their damaging effects will reverberate for centuries. IPCC datasets show global surface temperatures and sea levels have already increased, with projections indicating future warming of 4–4.5°C in continental South America if emission trends continue.

Amazon Tipping Points

We noted that deforestation has claimed approximately 19% of the Amazon, weakening its capacity as a carbon sink and impacting its biodiversity. The region faces worsening droughts, frequent fires, and a looming risk of ecosystem collapse, potentially releasing 120 billion tons of carbon into the atmosphere. Such climate “tipping points”—if crossed—could trigger abrupt, irreversible global changes, with dire impacts for local communities and Indigenous peoples.

Adaptation and Resilience Strategies

We endorsed seven urgent adaptation strategies:

- Improving water resource management and urban infrastructure
- Protecting and restoring vulnerable ecosystems
- Developing drought- and flood-resistant crops and applying climate-resilient agronomic practices
- Building resilience within public health systems to cope with the impacts of climate change on physical as well as mental health, especially that of children.

- Expanding disaster planning and community training
- Raising climate awareness through education
- Fostering scientific collaboration across disciplines

Policy, Governance, and COP-30 Agenda

We further emphasized the urgent need for transformative action by governments and the private sector. This involves shifting from extractive, carbon-intensive practices to renewable energy and the circular economy, and adhering to strict sustainability targets, along with transparent criteria and mechanisms for climate justice. Brazil's hosting of COP-30 offers a unique opportunity to drive global change by bringing together science, policy, business, and civil society to advance practical, nature-based, and evidence-based solutions.

In a sobering reflection, we noted that in a world where limiting warming to 1.5°C or even 2°C seems increasingly unattainable, catastrophic impacts are likely without drastic reductions in emissions and robust adaptation measures. Achieving climate resilience in South America requires coordinated efforts aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with science and policy playing central roles in shaping mitigation, adaptation, and global equity.

COP-30's critical test will be bridging the gap between the urgent climate reality and slow political and economic response by:

- Ending fossil fuel dependence through fair, science-based transition roadmaps.
- Placing science at the core of global commitments and climate governance.
- Mobilizing fair, fast, and equity-focused climate financing for vulnerable regions.
- Rethinking value chains to achieve true carbon neutrality.
- Centering climate justice and broad social engagement, especially for Indigenous and marginalized communities.
- Combatting greenwashing with strict metrics and transparent accountability.
- Reinventing governance to ensure all nations deliver on their climate targets—moving from pledges toward verified, measurable, real-world action.

Children are Our Priority

“May we always care for our children, not counting the cost, so that they ... always know their infinite worth.” Pope Francis

“Even as children, we can learn to be builders of bridges and seek opportunities to help others.” Pope Leo XIV

We noted that children — persons under age 18 — must be at the heart of all climate resilience efforts—not as passive victims, bystanders, or soon-to-be adults, but as key actors, indeed as “builders of bridges” in a new planetary ethic of care. Since the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences ten years ago called for more attention to children’s rights and their role as agents of change, matters have not improved.[1] The recent summits of the Pontifical Academies, reflecting the core traditions of humanism and the visionary leadership of Pope Francis, have noted the sobering fact that approximately one billion children live in areas severely affected by climate disasters, making their engagement both a moral duty and an existential necessity. This is not a distant appeal; in this moment of planetary peril, justice demands that we summon the socio-emotional sensibilities, energy, and imagination of the young to build climate resilience. Their voices reveal risks—and solutions—forged in the crucible of climate disruption, and their agency energizes the work of resilience with hope and resolve. We noted that if we do not incorporate children’s experiences and ideas today, we close the door on the promise of intergenerational justice tomorrow. The path to climate resilience, steep and dangerous, can only be crossed by uplifting the youngest among us—inviting them to co-create the world they will inherit. Thus, the eyes of the world were on Brasilia, the first of the ten regional summits of the Pontifical Academies to foreground the voices and experiences of children, as well as to call for adapting essential services to and for children systematically.

Further, we committed to:

- **Children’s Engagement** - as the fundamental component of the summit, combined with the optimism and hope our children’s voices provide toward ensuring a more resilient future, including but not limited to:
 - o Resilient and culturally congruent education
 - o Children and human rights
 - o Children’s participation in developing climate action plans
 - o Climate impact on children’s health and mental health
- **Regional Context:** Tailor solutions to Brazil’s and the region’s unique and diverse climate challenges and socio-economic, political/governance, and cultural contexts, including exploring the

role of forests and related nature-based solutions.

- **Community Engagement:** Collaborate with and empower local communities, Indigenous Peoples' leaders, and regional stakeholders in discussions and decision-making processes.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Foster regional and international cooperation and knowledge sharing to develop effective, innovative, and scalable child-centered climate solutions with consideration of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge systems.
- **Equity:** Ensure that we prioritize equity and the protection of the poorest and most vulnerable populations, including Indigenous people, children, and those who have the least to do with greenhouse gas emissions yet face the most significant burden. Address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on marginalized communities and incorporate diverse perspectives in climate planning.

Children under age 18 make up about 30% of the global population. The United Nations recognizes them as rights holders, whose voices and perspectives must be considered in decisions that affect their lives and communities. They are agents of change, and investing in children today is not only a matter of fulfilling their rights but also a strategic approach to ensuring sustainable development across generations.

We articulated an intergenerational perspective underscoring that empowering children contributes to stronger societies and more resilient futures. Yet, we noted, despite their agency, children remain among the groups most severely affected by the climate crisis, facing disproportionate risks to their health, education, right to playleisure and overall well-being [UNCRC's General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change](#).

Children and adolescents are rights-holders and cultural agents whose voices must be meaningfully included in policies, laws, and projects that impact their lives—especially those related to climate policy. [Research](#) conducted by Alana Institute and LACLIMA – Latin American Climate Lawyers Initiative for Mobilizing Action – highlighted that references to children in negotiations have shifted from sporadic mentions to more strategic recognition, from COP1 to COP29.

Since the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Brazil's Statute of the Child and Adolescent (1990), the right to participation has been recognized. Genuine participation strengthens citizenship, leadership, and personal development.

There have been essential advancements and decisions under the UNFCCC that call for integrating children into climate policymaking and recognizing their roles in education, communication, and leadership. Brazil is also one of almost 70 countries that have signed the

Intergovernmental Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action, a commitment to accelerate inclusive, child and youth-centered climate policies and action at national and global levels.

However, we observed that significant gaps still exist. Despite being heavily impacted by climate change, children and adolescents are still excluded from decision-making processes, often because of adult-centered structures and symbolic or manipulative participation practices.

To ensure safe, meaningful, and inclusive participation, efforts must:

- Avoid tokenism, manipulation, or control.
- Respect developmental stages, cultural diversity, and lived experiences.
- Guarantee informed consent, privacy, and voluntary participation.
- Be guided by trained adults who prioritize children's well-being.
- Reduce access barriers and acknowledge intersecting inequalities.
- Create spaces—both physical and symbolic—that foster genuine influence and feedback.

Participation should be flexible, either indirect (through consultations and research) or direct (via councils and advocacy). It must lead to concrete outcomes and respect the diversity of childhood and adolescence, especially those of marginalized groups.

We also note that for the protection, education, care, and empowerment of children to be fully achieved, the focus must expand to women—specifically mothers—who are the primary caregivers for their children's well-being. Mothers are a vital link in securing children's rights, representing the voices of the youngest children, who are among the most affected by the climate crisis but are not yet able to speak for themselves as adolescents can. By supporting the well-being and resilience of mothers, we ensure the genuine, safe, and inclusive participation of children.

Children are not only victims of the climate crisis; they are also agents of change and part of the solution. During the Summit, they presented innovative initiatives to tackle challenges and asked thoughtful and incisive questions. Adolescents from an Afro-Brazilian community in Pernambuco showcased their project *"From Waste to Resource,"* which uses a filtering system to decrease pollutant loads in cassava flour production. Others highlighted the important role of schools as spaces for resilience and nature-based education. Another notable example of meaningful participation was the [*mini COPs*](#)—local, autonomous experiences promoted by schools, civil society organizations, and community groups to amplify children's voices in climate dialogue.

They also expressed their concerns and suggestions through performances, such as music and poetry.

— excerpt from a poem recited by an Indigenous teenager as closing remarks at the summit.

The questions raised by children reflected not only their concern for their own rights but also for those of others – such as how to break social barriers and reach the most vulnerable populations, including people without access to formal education or those in the workforce; as well as questions related to ocean protection and expectations for what could be done differently at COP30.

[1] Children and Sustainable Development. Ecological Education in a Globalized World. Proceedings of the Workshop 13-15 November 2015. A.M. Battro, P. Léna, M. Sánchez Sorondo, J. von Braun (eds). Scripta Varia 135 pp. 433 | Springer © 2017
https://www.pas.va/content/dam/casinapioiv/pas/pdf-volumi/scripta-varia/sv_children_sustainable_development.pdf

In-person attendees of the Brazil Summit included:

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